

SWEET BRIAR COLLEGE



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THE SCENT OF ROSES



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THE SCENT OF ROSES



By

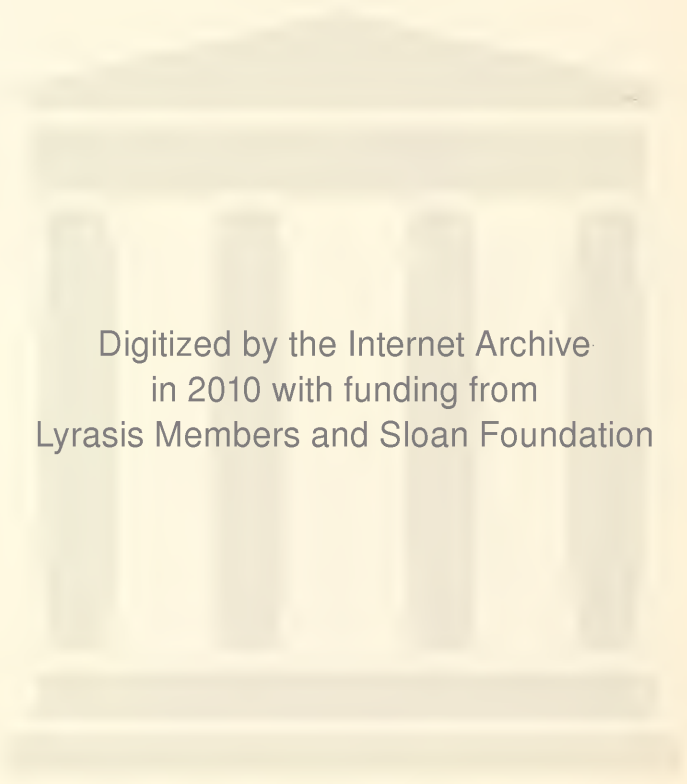
Shelley Rouse Aagesen

Class of 1921

... You may break, you may shatter the vase if you will,
But the scent of the roses will hang round it still.

Thomas Moore.





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This time last year was when
 Raymond, Jack, Tom, Ned, Ben,
 Acting like grown up men
 Made us all laugh.
 Oh, that gay holiday
 Seems now so far away,
 When Tom, Jack, Ned, Ben, Ray
 Weren't men by half.

Fullback Ray, bruised and brown,
 Ned's voice all up and down,
 Jacky's poetic frown,
 Ben's mighty sneeze,
 Tommy's long legs, his struts,-
 Think how we called them 'nuts',
 All our mean jibes and cuts,
 How we did tease!

Holidays here once more...
 Jack's captain in his corps,
 Ned is somewhere offshore
 Mosquito fleeting,
 Lieutenant Ben's at Lee,
 Tom at Fort Myer, he
 Hopes soon with Ray to be,
 The Boches beating.

These were our comrades who
 Flamed into heroes! Grew
 To such stature - true
 Knights of Romance.
 We've put our jests away,
 In twilit chapel grey,
 Kneeling, for them we pray -
 Champions of France.

"God save our splendid men,
Send them safe home again,
God save our men!
Keep them victorious,
Patient and chivalrous,
They are so dear to us,
God save our men!"

THREE BELLS

Almost dozing off to sleep,
 Roommate wrapped in slumber deep,
Sudden sounds the tocsin bell,
 Punctuated by a yell.

Leap up from your downy couch,
 Land on tack and murmur: "Ouch!"
March the hall in double rows,
 Run some splinters in your toes.

Covered only by a cape,
 Reach at last the fire escape,
Quick descend the ladder slim
 In a silence deep and grim.

Sadly think of your warm bed,
 Girl above steps on your head,
Leave the last rung with a bound,
 Come down hard upon the ground.

Set off at a fearful pace
 To the ordained meeting place
Trip on stone and down you fall,
 As your name's read at roll-call.

Rise, dash madly round the turn
 In time to hear Miss Martin's stern:
"Should be here, she's out of line,-
 Have to give Miss Rouse a fine."

Night is dark, you're sleeping well,
 Sudden sounds the tocsin bell,
Forced your downy nest to leave -
 Say, have you a special peeve?

"MAIL'S COME!"

I rush to join the waiting line,
It's there for mail and I want mine.
But just as I fall into place
After a most exciting race,
The girl behind gives me a shove
Then smiles and says: "Excuse me, love,
Just get ours, won't you? One six eight, -
I have a class, 'fraid I'll be late;
Oh, thank you, you are awfully good,"
Stage whisper: "See! I knew she would."
I struggle on and strive to smile,
Someone stands on my foot awhile,
I pinch her playfully and say:
"Please, will you get out of my way?"
She turns around and stares at me,
"And pray," she says, "who may you be?"
I glare right back and hold my own.
From up in front there comes a moan:
"No mail for me! Why Miss Eubanks,
I have a man who's in the tanks, -
He always writes on Saturday -
Perhaps he's what...what's that you say?"
A sweet voice sings out: "Shelley dear...
No, look, I'm sitting right up here -
You'll get my mail, now won't you, Shell?
I'm so afraid the darned old bell
Will ring before I get my letter -
You do it, that will be much better,
I'll ~~wait~~ wait right here upon the stair."
I say: "All right," and mildly swear.
Only twelve girls ahead of me,
I cannot breathe, I cannot see.
Someone comes breezing down the line -
"Please get three six two, four, and nine..."
I try to memorize them, then

(Cont.)

Forget them all, I have just ten
Revolving in my poor tired brain,
I can't collect them all again.
At last I reach the window sill,
Miss Eubanks says: "Why, you look ill!"
"Any for us?" I gasp and shout.
She hands a pile of letters out;
I look them o'er, then turn quite pale,-
It's all my lucky roommate's mail.
But I am catching on a bit,
Tomorrow I am going to sit
And hail the girl who heads the line
With: "Listen, sweetheart, please get mine!"

Sweet Briar Magazine - 1918

BABY BEN

I'm afraid to go out of my room today
Because of the girl who's across the way,
Because of the proctor right next door,
And because of the Soph on the upper floor.
For I wound my Baby Ben last night
And I set it wrong instead of right.
I never heard its voice at all,
But the girls who live here on our hall
Swear it went off at three A. M.,
Vow I have no regard for them,
Declare there's going to be one grand fight
If ever I show my face tonight.

So now I am sitting behind the door,
With a chair and a chest-of-drawers before,
With a crop in my hand, and a good-sized rock,
And the pine cone weight off our cuckoo clock,
And I can't go out of my room today,
Because of the girl who's across the way,
Because of the proctor right next door,
And because of that Soph on the upper floor.

"Briar Patch" - 1919

NINE GROANS

"What time do you have breakfast here?
At seven-thirty? Listen, dear,
Wake me at seven twenty-nine...
Sure, sure, there will be lots of time,
Just throw a shoe, or anything,
I'll never hear the old bell ring."

The morning dawns both bright and fair,
There's smell of bacon on the air.
The whistle jars my slumbers sweet,
My roommate leaps up to her feet
And yelps she rudely: "Get up, Shell,
There goes the blank-blank rising bell!"
"Avaunt," I snap, "and let me sleep;
The scrambled eggs will more than keep."
Peg, noting my pugnacious tone,
Departs and leaves me all alone.
I doze while minute hands go round,
Then waken with a startled bound.
It's very still, no noise I hear;
The silence helps confirm my fear.
With coat o'er sleeping togs bright-hued,
I do a marathon for food
And try to gain the steps before
Old Stone-Face shuts and bolts the door.
Alas, too late! With fiendish glee
She slams it in the face of me.
I sink down on the lowest stair
And while I'm sadly drooping there,
I hear a strange click-clickty-click
Like flapping shoestrings striking brick.
Marie appears with wild-eyed stare,
(And oh, but you should see her hair!)
"Why, Shell," she says, "are you here too?"
"Yup-yup," I answer, "can't get through,

(Cont.)

Cerberus is too smart for me."
"No one can fox her," sighs Marie.
Just then I find that in the rush
I've brought along my wet toothbrush.
I hurl it at the radiator,
"Doggone Effie! I just hate her!"
She peers out at me with a grin
And smirks: "A quarter lets you in."
"Never!" I vow, "I'd sooner take
To breakfasting on chocolate cake,-
Numerous other people do,
Rather than argue here with you."
She doesn't deign to answer me,
But shuts the door so I can't see
My little friends and playmates, who
Are feeding as I long to do.
I sag down on the steps again
And try to map out a campaign
For breaking through that fast-closed door,
Some scheme that's helped me in before.
But not a chance, for Effie's wise
And all my plans seems to surmise.
A teacher comes into my view:
"Why, Miss Rouse, what is wrong with you?"
"Nothing," I say and gently smile,
"I'm merely resting here awhile,
I thought to breakfast, but I find
Effie has helped me change my mind."
Miss Crawford laughs and goes on by,
And Effie dares not question why
She comes in late to breakfast...Gee,
I wish that I were Faculty!

MISS(ED) AMERICA

If I had any choice at all,

If I had any say,

I would be very different

From what I am today.

Because:

I want Libby's gracious manner

I want Buffy Taylor's charm,

I would ride a horse like Russe,

I'd have Fanny's tennis arm.

I want Rhoda's splendid profile,

Or else Sidddy Franklin's nose,

I want eyes like Ida Massie's,

Fran's complexion like a rose.

I want Helen Johnston's bearing,

And to have real pep like Trot,

I want hair like Stanley Miller's,-

Hers is copper, mine is not.

I want lashes like Louisa's,

I want good old Shidler's smile,

I want teeth like 'Tilla Schurman's,

I want Helen Beeson's style.

I would sing like M. McNally,

I would play like Selma Brandt,

I would dance like Emma Adams,-

Isn't it too bad I can't?

I want Willy Wilson's dimples,

I would draw like Frances Raiff,

I would clear the bar like Amey,

I'd wear black and white like Shafe.

I'd play bridge like Laura Thompson

Who is at it by the hour,

I would make fudge like Gwen Barret's,

I want Fiske's costuming power.

I want humor like Kate Cordes',

I want Lette Shoop's pretty feet,

I would be like Edith Durrell,

Who is very, very neat.

I want Mary Kemper's freckles,

(Cont.)

I want Maynette's pleasant voice,
And lovely hands like Brosius,
If I just could have a choice.
I would swat a ball as Burd does,
I would guard like McLemore,
I would shoot a goal like Ellen,-
My own aim is very poor.
I want E. Cole's concentration,
And ability like Tay,
I would manage plays like Katy
In a most efficient way.

And:

If I had all these other things,
With Mattie Hammond's curl,
I really think that I would be
A most attractive girl.

Sweet Briar Magazine - 1920

FINAL BAWL
or
REFLECTIONS ON A KEYDET

Oh, how I wish that I had been
The kind of girl to pet,-
I might have had the 'miniature'
I sought and didn't get!

MAY DAY

When violets with amethyst
Are carpeting the hills,
And little golden breezes
Ripple through the daffodils:

When ivory petals flutter
From the old magnolia tree,
And the distant Blue Ridge deepens
Into lapis lazuli:

When the dogwood's constellations
Star the ruddy roads around,
And the fallen cherry blossoms
Lie in drifts upon the ground:

Then it's springtime in Virginia
And the stately boxwoods green
Form again a guard of honor
For Sweet Briar's fair young queen.

"Briar Patch" - 1920

WIRELESS

Of all we suffered at Sweet Briar from trial and tribulation,
I think the Amherst operator caused us most vexation.

Our messages, repeated in a tone both slow and lazy,
Caused audible amusement that nearly drove us crazy.
No secret was too intimate for him to know or hear,
No item of our private life escaped his flapping ear.
He knew our codes, our beau's address, the perfume of our choice,
He knew who asked us to the proms, he knew our sweetheart's voice.
He was the world's most brilliant man; so far as knowledge went,
Not Mr. Dew, the Faculty, nor eke the President
Knew half as much as that soul learned from listening on the wire
To all the talk that circulated to and from the Briar.

It was unthought of to indulge in clubby conversations,
It was impossible to hold the mildest of flirtations.
He knew our nicknames, weekend trips and all the dates we had,
He knew each figure on the bills that J. P. Bell sent Dad.
He was all friendliness and joy, he volunteered his aid,
He burst into long-distance talks with comment gay or staid,-
"They cut you off? Just hold the wire; I'll get him back for you, Sweet Briar."

(Cont.)

We'd telegraph our homes for clothes when we were
in a hurry,
The things we asked for never seemed to give the
man a worry.
He knew our size, he knew our furs, the colors
that we wore,
He knew our gowns, he knew our hats,- it was an
awful bore.
Once I was sure I had him stumped, but still it
didn't hold him,
He rose to the occasion and repeated what I told
him,
Although his blushes burnt the wire,- "Was that
'corset'? Yes, Ma'am, Sweet Briar."

The thought of speaking to the man would make us
sigh and groan,
We'd rather take a Math exam than use the telephone.
He knew the places where we ate, and who had been
expelled.
He knew what sort of flowers we got and how they
looked and smelled,
He knew the horses that we rode, he knew the things
we bought,
He knew the courses that we flunked, he knew our
every thought.

If Miss McVea reads this, I hope it won't arouse
her ire,-
Perhaps the College will be put upon a private
wire.

"Briar Patch" - 1923

NOSTALGIA

These are the things a Sweet Briar girl remembers,
These magical May evenings when we take
Butter and milk and strawberries and honey
And cook our supper out across the lake.

Incense of toasting coffee, twigs, and bacon,
Lilting of laughter, wail of whippoorwill,
And long, last rosy rays o'er wood and water
For light upon our gypsying, until

The sun lets slip the grey dove of the evening
To fetch the low-swung lantern of the moon.
A banjo's strumming throbs across the ripples,
A plaintive voice feels for a twilight tune.

The fire dies down, we file along the pathway,
Where stunted pines reach out to brush the cheek,
Groping for us with scraggy, lichened fingers
While shadows play at ghostly hide-and-seek.

The creaking of a slow oar in its oar-lock,
The swish of little waves against a boat,
The apple blossom fragrance of an orchard,
Will ever cause a tightening in my throat.

These things a Sweet Briar girl remembers always
And mindful of them, feels a homesick ache
For friendships wrought in magic of May moonlight,
When we cooked supper out across the lake.

BALLAD OF THE ALUMNAE

Why did we worry so yesteryear?
What were the troubles that used to fret?
Why did we dread a professor's jeer,
Groan at the sight of a fish-croquette,
Tremble at Lynchburg's billets de dettes,
Scream at St. Angelo's gentleman cow?
Why did we do so? We forget:
Sweet Briar's thorns are roses now.

What made us shake as exams drew near,
Shiver, when sudden we, rubberless, met
Dr. M. Harley, that fierce old dear,
Mistress of sulphuric epithet?
Why did we cling to our 'cliquish' set?
Why, every term, did we solemnly vow
Not to come back? Why? We forget:
Sweet Briar's thorns are roses now.

Why did we live in such abject fear
Lest we be labelled as 'teacher's pet'?
How could a flunk-note wring a tear?
Why craved we earrings of jade or jet,
'Specials' from undergrad or cadet,
Why wail to sleep on the big haymow?
Why did we bother?... We forget:
Sweet Briar's thorns are roses now.

Envoy

Memories sweet, like a coronet,
Princesses, wreath the alumnaal brow,
Once did they prick?... Well, we forget:
Sweet Briar's thorns are roses now.

